21147 - Can We Drink Water While Standing in Islam?

the question

I have read some Hadiths which say that it is forbidden to drink while standing. Does this mean that drinking while standing is prohibited?

Summary of answer

The basic ruling is that one should drink while sitting, which is better, but one may drink while standing. The Prophet did both to demonstrate that there is a lot of room for manoeuvre in this matter.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There are Hadiths which say that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade drinking while standing. For example, Muslim (2024, 2025) narrated from Anas and Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade drinking while standing.

But there are other Hadiths which say that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) drank while standing, such as the following:

- Al-Bukhari (1637) and Muslim (2027) narrated that Ibn Mas`ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I brought water to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from Zamzam and he drank while standing.
- Al-Bukhari (5615) narrated from `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) that he drank while standing then he said: Some people say it is disliked for one of you to drink while standing, but I saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) doing what you have seen

me do.

- Ahmad (797) narrated that `Ali ibn Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) drank while standing, and the people looked at him as if they objected to that. He said: “What are you looking at? If I drink while standing, I saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) drink while standing, and if I drink sitting, I saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) drink while sitting.” Ahmad Shakir said in Tahqiq Al-Musnad: “Its chain of narration is authentic.`
- At-Tirmidhi (1881) narrated that Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “We used to eat at the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while walking , and we used to drink while standing.” (Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Sahih At-Tirmidhi)

The scholars reconciled these Hadiths by stating that the forbidding mentioned here does not mean that it is prohibited, rather it is to be understood as advice, and that it is better to drink while sitting . The Hadiths which describe the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) drinking while standing indicate that it is permissible to do that.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“There is no contradiction in these Hadiths, praise be to Allah, and none of them are inauthentic. Rather they are all authentic. The correct view is that the forbidding mentioned in them is to be understood as meaning that it is disliked. The fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) drank while standing indicates that it is permissible to do so. This is all that needs to be said on the matter.

If it is asked: How come it is disliked to drink while standing when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did that?

The answer is that if what he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did was to show that it is permissible, then it is not disliked, rather he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was obliged to show and explain that, so how can it be disliked? It is proven that the Prophet (peace

and blessings of Allah be upon him) did Wudu` washing each part only once, and that he circumambulated the Ka`bah (i.e., did Tawaf) riding a camel – even though there is scholarly consensus that it is better to do Wudu` washing each part three times and that it is better to do Tawaf walking. There are many similar examples. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was demonstrating that something is permissible one time or many times, but he persisted in following the better option. So usually when he did Wudu he washed each part three times, and he usually did Tawaf walking, and he usually drank while sitting. This is clear and is not confusing to anyone who has the slightest claim to knowledge. And Allah knows best.

This reconciliation between the Hadiths was suggested by Al-Khattabi, Ibn Battal, At-Tabari and others.

Al-Hafidh said in Fat-h Al-Bari:

“This is the best and soundest explanation, and the farthest removed from contradiction.”

It says in Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da`imah (22/133):

“The basic ruling is that one should drink while sitting , which is better, but one may drink while standing. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did both to demonstrate that there is a lot of room for manoeuvre in this matter.”

And Allah knows best.